Retaining Lineage, Honors, and History for the Strategic Army

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### ABSTRACT

The nature of warfare has undergone revolutionary changes over the past several decades. Battles are no longer conducted solely by combat forces deployed into zones of hostilities. Today, combat takes many forms and is conducted by units fundamentally different from the conventional combat arms, operating in new domains and using ways and means never before considered. The Army's current system of official lineage and honors, however, reflects an outdated approach to capturing modern warfare. The TDA units are "non-deployable" or "strategic" and, as such, do not have official recognition of lineages and a historical record of honors. This creates a system of inequality that fails to recognize the new domains and nature of combat.
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Abstract

The nature of warfare has undergone revolutionary changes over the past several decades. Battles are no longer conducted solely by combat forces deployed into zones of hostilities. Today, combat takes many forms and is conducted by units fundamentally different from the conventional combat arms, operating in new domains and using ways and means never before considered. The Army's current system of official lineage and honors, however, reflects an outdated approach to capturing modern warfare. The TDA units are "non-deployable" or "strategic" and, as such, do not have official recognition of lineages and a historical record of honors. This creates a system of inequality that fails to recognize the new domains and nature of combat.
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A Soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon.

—Napoleon Bonaparte

The Commander of Network Enterprise Command (NETCOM) has a dilemma, and it involves the classification of 47 units like the 181st Signal Company. The 181st Signal Company was initially constituted in January 1946. It subsequently earned campaign participation credit and two Meritorious Unit Commendations for actions in the Korean War. The decision facing Major General (MG) Morrison is whether to reclassify the 181st, and the other 46 organizations in his command, as Modification Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE)—standard formation used by the Army for operational forces—or Table of Distribution and Alliances (TDA)—formation used for specialized and decentralized forces.

These names, while cumbersome to say, are the foundation for the Army organization and allocation of resources. In making this seemingly simple decision, MG Morrison either aligns his forces according to their force development classification and loses the lineage and honors, or he maintains the current incorrect classification and retains lineage and honors earned by the formations. This is a decision between two bad options; it is the product of the intersection of two United States Army processes that individually have strengths and benefits to our formations but together have unintended consequences. This paper raises the question of how effectively the Army is executing these processes developed in 1943 while fielding the appropriate military force to defend the United States beyond 2016.

The nature of warfare has undergone revolutionary changes over the past several decades. Battles are no longer conducted solely by combat forces deployed into
zones of hostilities. Today, combat takes many forms and is conducted by units fundamentally different from the conventional combat arms, operating in new domains and using ways and means never before considered. The Army’s current system of official lineage and honors, however, reflects an outdated approach to capturing modern warfare. The TDA units are “non-deployable” or “strategic” and, as such, do not have official recognition of lineages and a historical record of honors. This creates a system of inequality that fails to recognize the new domains and nature of combat.

To resolve this inequality, the Army should provide all units lineage and honors for their contribution to the defense of our nation. Failing to do this could have consequences for the full spectrum of Army recruiting, training, operating, and retaining the best force possible for both conventional and specialized missions. This is important across the Army but is especially important in the technical fields where the Army has slotted our TDA formations. Recruiting, training, and retaining soldiers into the Army with technical skills in cyber, space, and computers requires an appeal to both service and specialization. Recognizing these fields as critical to the defense of our nation and providing them lineage, honors, and history develops a commitment and connection with the Army not present today.

There are two overlapping activities that make the question of lineage, honors, and history of a unit complicated. The first is the formation and documentation of a new Army unit during the force development process and includes the determination of the unit authorization type. This process determines the new units’ designation of MTOE or TDA. The second is the Army Historical Program—under the direction of the Center for Military History—that determines the way history is maintained for all formations. The
Army Historical Program (AHP) is the collective effort of a number of United States Army historical organizations that capture the history of the Army. The program—led by the U.S. Army Center for Military History (CMH)—is responsible for the regulations and procedures for collecting, recording, and maintaining historical materials including lineage and honors.

To understand how the intersection of these two processes affects the Army, this paper walks through the force development process and details the mission and scope of the CMH and the AHP. Those processes are then analyzed to determine their viability and recommendations are made to improve their products in current and future operational environments.

**Force Development Process**

The force development process is the first part of this intersection to explain. Since military force is an instrument of politics, then the strategic importance of the required capabilities is self-evident. Documents such as the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the National Military Strategy (NMS) define the operational capabilities required of the military, and specifically the Army. The QDR “seeks to adapt, reshape, and rebalance our military to prepare for the strategic challenges and opportunities we face in the years ahead.”² The National Military Strategy (NMS) – issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense – details the required capabilities of the armed services. Strategic documents articulate the capabilities required for future operating environments and lead to the creation of the Army of the future through the force development process.³

Formally, the force development process covered in Army Regulation 71-32, *Force Development and Documentation*, “determines organizational and materiel
The five phases of the force development process include identification of the requirement, development of organizational models, definition of the total force structure requirement, determination of affordability, supportability and executability, and finally the documentation of authorizations. Ultimately, this process raises, maintains, and sustains the Army to ensure the appropriate force structure is available to execute assigned missions and functions.

While all of the force development phases are important to the execution of this process, the last step is the most important for this discussion. The fifth phase of the force development process—the documenting of unit authorizations—is the combination of developing an organizational model and matching it with organizational authorizations. This document—the Army Structure Memorandum—is the source of a unit’s mission, structure, personnel and equipment requirements and authorizations. The document provides the Army approval to develop the best-structured and resourced force possible. The authorization document is specific to every unit in the Army and designates the unit as either an MTOE or TDA formation.

The primary formation type is the MTOE, which is determined through the process of reviewing TOEs, modifying them to meet new mission requirements, and matching them with affordable manning and equipment levels. In other words, an MTOE formation is the Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA) approved unit organization, personnel, and equipment required for accomplishing the necessary mission. It is the foundational document for all aspects of personnel, equipment, unit
status reporting, and supply and maintenance status. The MTOE document determines the modernization the unit receives based on its prioritization by HQDA.

In contrast to the MTOE, the TDA is developed for organizational structures that do not have existing TOEs. They are usually specialized formations with a different composition of personnel and equipment based on the post, camp, or station they support. An example of this is a strategic signal company in Kuwait compared to a strategic signal company in Germany. While these formations have the same mission, the difference in the population they support requires a different manning allocation. Similar to the MTOE documentation, the TDA documents are built under the direction of HQDA by United States Army Force Management Support Agency (USAFMSA), which allows for oversight and standardization of unit design, supportability analysis, and modernization planning.7

The force development and unit documentation process currently in use was developed in 1943. Much has changed in both the Army and in the nature of war since that time. One change to the original system occurred in 2008. It introduced the concepts of generating and operating forces that further define MTOE and TDA units. Operating forces are units whose primary mission is to participate in combat and the integral supporting elements thereof, while generating forces are units whose primary mission is to generate and sustain the operational Army’s capabilities for employment by joint force commanders.8 As time passed, the clarity of the classifications of formations has become more and more blurred. One example of inconsistency was the designation of training units as MTOE formations in order to incorporate lineage, honors, and history to the newest Army recruits during initial training. This concept is
addressed later in this paper. While the force development process is officially completed with the Army Structure Memorandum, this is where the intersection with history and the AHP begins.

History of Army History

Once an Army formation is developed, resourced, and executing its mission, it is important to understand how their lineage, honors, and history are maintained. Maintaining the history of the Army is now largely taken for granted but it has not always been recorded appropriately. In fact, just over a hundred years ago the Army did not have a formal process for recording actions of our military formations. In earlier times, as a matter of pride and honor, units would embroider the names of battles they had participated in on their colors. This practice was not standardized, was difficult to confirm, and ultimately led to the first official historical organization created by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. This organization was called the Heraldic Program Office and was part of the War Department General Staff. The specific mission of maintaining historical information about Army units was placed into the hands of the Historical Section of the Army War College.⁹

After several name and location changes, the Historical Section was named the Center for Military History (CMH) and assigned to the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army. One part of the myriad of duties of the CMH is the Army Historical Program (AHP) that is responsible for developing policies and establishing standards for Army history and associated historical activities, preparing the official history of the U.S. Army in war and peace… providing historical perspective and support to the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army… determining and publishing the lineage and honors of specified Army units… and determining the official designation of Army units and maintaining a record of unit status changes.¹⁰
The CMH, as the owner of the AHP, executes these critical functions through four sections, two of which are relevant for this discussion. First, the Force Structure and Unit History Branch record any changes-in-status directives including activations, inactivations, and redesignations. They also advise the Army Staff during reorganizations, downsizing, or reflagging. The process includes maintaining a unit order of merit list “for the purpose of retaining the units with the most distinguished and suitable history whenever possible.” This order of merit list is critical during the force development process as it ensures the alignment of previous excellence with future operations and assists during downsizing to retain and maintain lineage and history.

The second section is the Organizational History Branch, which is responsible for determining lineage and honors for TOE units in all components—Active, National Guard, and Reserve. Lineage and honors are complex and formalized processes relying on official documentation. To understand this more fully, unit lineage establishes continuity of the unit through activations and inactivations. It also validates the unit’s entitlement to honors and organizational history. It is critical that every lineage entry has substantial proof. On the other hand, “honors are the units’ decorations and credit for campaign participation and war service that have been bestowed by a competent authority upon an organization.” These unit awards include campaign participation credit, campaign streamers, war service streamers, combat infantry streamers, earned honor devices, and several others. Together, the lineage and honors described are then compiled into a concise document called the Lineage and Honors Certificate that “denotes its dates of constitution, activations and inactivations, and changes in unit designation. It also includes the official list of battle honors awarded to the unit,
campaign participation credit, and unit decorations.” This document is often called the “soul of a formation” and is the rallying point of all soldiers.

In addition to the two critical sections that the CMH directs in executing the AHP, another important tool for capturing the significant aspects of a formation is its organizational history. History is a decentralized and informal process relying on discipline and compliance by unit commanders at multiple echelons. By definition, organizational history is the institutional memory of a military organization. The commander is responsible for providing “documentary evidence of an organization’s history, heritage, traditions, and right to organizational historical artifacts.” The retention of pictures, newspaper clipping, programs, unit and annual histories are for the express purpose of “increase[ing] individual morale and organizational esprit, as well as public pride and respect for Army organizations.” This system is much less structured than the lineage and honors process and relies heavily on unit commanders and their staff to ensure the process is routinely accomplished to a high standard.

All aspects of retaining Army history are as critical today as in 1990 when the former Chief of Military History, BG Harold W. Nelson described the mission of the CMH. He stated that history is important to “ensure that the Total Army is aware of its history… and that military history and historical perspective are applied by its staff in solving both present-day problems and future problems.” Ultimately, while the force development process creates the formation and designates units as either MTOE or TDA, it also establishes whether the unit will have lineage, honors, and history as the AHP regulations direct. It is important to recognize that connection and then analyze its viability in today’s environment.
Force Development Analysis

To determine if a current process works, it is analyzed with respect to its ability to produce the required products. For the force development process, the mission is to raise, maintain, and sustain an Army, while the AHP mission is to use history to educate the current Army and assist in developing future Army. This paper is less about the formation of the Army than it is about the history of the Army. Though scrutiny of the force development process in this paper is not comprehensive, the current force development process is effective for raising, maintaining, and sustaining the Army. These formations provide military capabilities as articulated in the national strategy and guidance documents.

One aspect of the force development process that is challenging is converting formations from MTOE to TDA and from TDA to MTOE once they are developed. This occurs infrequently but is necessary when organizations transform from tactical to strategic formations to align with force development regulations. This is the case with units like the 181st Signal Company—a strategic signal company that should be TDA but has been MTOE for decades. As defined earlier, TDA units are developed for specific missions and thus, it is necessary to change their formations, equipment, and personnel distribution more frequently than standardized MTOE formations. One benefit of TDA formations is the ability to adjust the individual formations much more rapidly.

MTOE formations, however, are modernized on a schedule driven by the force development process that can take up to five years. TDA formations do not have time to execute change and still maintain pace with technology. They must reorganize and modernize in order to maintain relevance and proficiency in rapidly adapting fields such as signal, military intelligence, space, and cyber. In addition, since TDA organizations
are built to support specific locations, like garrison support, a change in the base size affects the force structure required to support it. Changing TDA formations is significantly faster than adjusting MTOE formations because of the necessity to change quickly to maintain formation and technological advantages.

Ultimately, the force development process is a viable mechanism for defining the force requirement, designing the appropriate force, building that force, and delivering that force to the commanders. The creation of the Army Structure Memorandum details the formation type—MTOE or TDA—and has further implications toward prioritization of modernization and personnel actions for that organization. However, the MTOE and TDA delineation should not be a rationale for regulating lineage, honors, and history programs for Army formations. While the force development process does not require change to support a more inclusive historical program, a deeper dive on the force development process is necessary as the nature and character of warfare continues to evolve. With that analysis in mind for the first CMH process, the next step is to review the intersecting AHP process.

Army Historical Program Analysis

As articulated earlier the final phase of the force development process delineates the Army unit as either MTOE or TDA. Under the current provisions of the Army regulations, the historical opportunities for MTOE and TDA units are different. The mission of the AHP “is to preserve, critically interpret, disseminate, and teach military history; provide historical advice; and simulate historical mindedness within the Army and throughout the nation.” This mission is accomplished using military history in several specific ways, which include “preserving the institutional memory of the Army; writing the official history of the Army in peace and war; providing historical support in
decision making; and enhancing unit pride and esprit de corps.”21 The differences in the AHP support for MTOE and TDA units are clearly stated in the regulations and must be considered when determining their ability to accomplish their assigned mission. Two examples of those differences explored below include the inability for TDA units to apply for lineage and honors certificates or campaign participation credit and streamers.

First, TDA formations are not able to receive lineage and honors certificates. The CMH will “furnish historical background information to other TDA organizations in lieu of lineage and honors certificates.”22 The regulations add that the CMH will “certify entitlement to honors for active MTOE organizations and entitlements to unit decorations for TDA organizations authorized a distinguishing flag.”23 As all Army formations are conceived, prioritized, and developed through the force development process in order to support the national defense, it is arguable that both formation types execute critical missions. While some may be more noteworthy than others, all execute a task deemed necessary through the force development process. Finally, the Army Structure Memorandum documents every formation’s birth date—the activation date—that is the foundation of the lineage and honors certificate. As the AHP regulations state, the lineage and honors certificate is designed as a rallying point for soldiers and all formations should be entitled to one. Depriving TDA formations of the lineage and honor certificate is contrary to their objectives of building esprit de corps, advising leadership on future force development, and preserving the history in peace and war.

The regulation states that MTOE units are entitled to lineage and honors certificates but exclude TDA organizations from this tradition. While this distinction was appropriate when originally developed, it is no longer the best way to maintain the
history of Army formations for a number of reasons. First, the AHP is not able to accurately ascertain the holistic account of history as required by their mission statement without TDA formations being represented with lineage and honors. Second, TDA organizations are not able to apply for honors including campaign participation credit, campaign streamer, war service streamers, earned honor devices, and others. Many TDA organizations are nondeployable units that execute a HQDA-directed mission in both the U.S. and in forward stationed environments. Because of the specified mission to participate in combat or the support of combat troops, they are classified as operational forces. Operational forces can include TDA formations like the conversion of the 181st Signal Company from MTOE to TDA.

This company, while conducting the same mission, will convert from the 181st Signal Company to the U.S. Army Signal Activity (Defense Satellite Control System) in fiscal year 2017. Though the 181st Signal Company has a lineage and honors certificate reflecting its service since 1946 with two unit commendations and a presidential citation, it will return those honors to the file of lineages retained by CMH. This storage of lineage and honors is a result of the administrative transitioning from MTOE to TDA in accordance with CMH and AHP regulations. The 181st Signal Company, and 46 other organizations’ lineage, honors, and history remains in storage until the Army mission forms MTOE signal units to whom they can assign historical unit designations and appropriate lineage, honors, and history.

When MTOE units are formed, through the force development process, the CMH determines if there is a numbered unit in the repository of lineages to align with the new formation. This retains the strongest unit history for the Army. There is no historical
precedent that the Army can designate to newly developed TDA formations therefore TDA organizations do not receive unit designation and they cannot apply for lineage and honors. For the conversion of 47 units in NETCOM, this is not appropriate as their units have a documented and vetted history. However, there are new formations that represent the new character of war, such as the recently created cyber or space organizations. These do not have units from which to tie their history. While it makes sense that units with no historical counterpart are not aligned to former Army units, the future contributions to our nation are unknown. They should have the opportunity to have their achievements captured. However, if the Army chooses to execute the conversion from MTOE to TDA, the unit’s history goes into storage at the CMH. The converted formations have not changed their mission and they should not lose their contributions because of an administrative conversion from MTOE to TDA.

Recommendations and Policy Changes

Through the analysis of the force development process and the regulations that direct the AHP, it is clear that we should consider some changes. Those changes should include separating the unit authorization type from the historical programs, updating the regulations for entitlement to lineage and honors certificates, and providing the ability for TDA organizations to apply for unit honors. Instituting change in any organization is difficult and a cultural change in the Army might be extremely difficult. However, change is necessary to maintain the optimal force for our national defense.

The first and easiest recommendation is to separate the unit authorization type from the AHP. The five phases of the force development process result in the unit authorization documents designating units as either MTOE or TDA formations. It is an efficient and effective way to allocate personnel and equipment. However, the MTOE
and TDA differentiation is not an appropriate distinction for retaining or applying for lineage, honors, and history of Army formations defending our national interests.

The next set of recommendations is more challenging and more important. The AHP has significant strategic consequences for our Army—past, present, and future—including recruiting for modern warfare, capturing historical significance for events and actions, advising leadership for future structure decisions, and building esprit de corps. Therefore, the CMH and AHP must be as holistic in their operations as possible. This means being inclusive of all formation types when issuing historical support and providing all formations lineage and honors as deemed appropriate for their level of engagement in defense of our nation and national interests. By not holistically accounting for the historical actions of all formations, some parts of the Army history and therefore facts pertinent to future planning considerations are lost. This can affect the people the Army recruits, the investments the Army makes in research and development, and way the Army executes national defense in the future.

A decade ago, the Army acknowledged the changing nature of warfare and the need to recognize all who engage the enemy by creating the Combat Action Badge (CAB). This was not a short-term or shortsighted process. It began when the Army initiated the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) in October 1943 to recognize infantry and Special Forces soldiers in combat. The introduction and presentation of the CIB demonstrated the importance of recruiting and retaining highly proficient, tough, hard, and aggressive infantry, which can be obtained only by developing a high degree of individual all-around proficiency on the part of every infantryman. As a means of attaining the high standards desired and to foster esprit de corps in infantry units, the Expert Infantryman and the Combat Infantryman badges are established for infantry personnel.26
It was important in 1943 to recognize soldiers who were standing on the front line of defense and paying a heavy price for our freedoms. In 2005, the CAB reflected many of the same principles that the CIB addressed. The intention of the CAB was to ‘attain high standards’ and ‘foster esprit de corps.’ It was necessary to “recognize combat participation by members of the Army”27 who serve their country, deployed to combat zones and in imminent danger areas but are not infantry or Special Forces soldiers. The CAB recognized combat experience of all members of the service and provided a means to ensure honor was bestowed upon all who had engaged with and been engaged by the enemy since September 11, 2001. This action recognized the combat experiences of many soldiers in many different career fields who fought—and in some cases paid the ultimate sacrifice—for their nation. These efforts were not formally recognized in previous military operations because no process outside the CIB existed. This evolution demonstrates the ability and inclination of the Army to adjust as the nature of warfare changes.

Units converting from MTOE to TDA should retain their lineage and honors and newly formed organizations like the Cyber Protection Brigade (CPB) should begin a new chapter of military operations. The assigned mission of the CPB is “to conduct global cyberspace operations to deter, disrupt, and defeat our adversary’s cyberspace operations, and defend the United States through specialized cyber support missions.”28 While the cyber mission is relatively new, it is clearly a threat the U.S. and the Army are taking seriously. Creating lineage and maintaining accurate historical records for this formation ensures development of the best forces for the future—a mission of the AHP.
The honors process directed by AR 600-8-22, *Unit Awards*, and overseen by the CMH, should be modified to allow for the inclusion of TDA units. This minor change ensures that if a unit has a significant role in combat or action that contributes to our national defense, it can submit the necessary documentation to earn honor reflective of its service. The unit would have those validated credentials bestowed upon them by the appropriate agency and thereby added to the lineage and honors certificate. By revising the regulation to allow all units to earn honors due to the accomplishments of the unit, and attribute the honors earned to the unit, soldiers can be proud of their accomplishments. This achieves the very intent of the AHP which is to build esprit and historical connections. Currently, the opportunity to apply for honors and lineage is not an option available to TDA formations and it deprives them of validation of their significant service to the nation. Ultimately, these three recommendations for the AHP process ensure the maintenance of a holistic account of history for both current operations and future force development decisions.

Conclusion

This analysis makes it clear that the force development and Army historical programs developed during World War II are no longer sufficient for capturing military actions of our current force in 2016. As indicated by the cultural changes already executed by the Army and the changes in the nature of warfare, it is time for the Army to change the way lineage, honors, and history are maintained. Separating the unit authorization type from the historical program is the first and most critical recommendation. The second recommendation is to revise the entitlements to lineage and honors, and finally to allow all units to apply for unit honors. Making these changes holistically captures militarily significant actions no matter where they come from on the
battlefield—an open field of battle or a sensitive compartmented information facility (SCIF).

There are a few barriers to these recommended changes. One of the roadblocks is ignorance. The historical delineations between MTOE and TDA do not affect most of the Army because most leaders do not understand them. Commanders of combat arms formations have lineage, honors, and historical records for their formations because they are MTOE units. The TDA commanders do not receive those credentials for their units. In addition, there are the traditionalists. Traditionalists believe that combat is unchanging and tradition and honor are reserved for those who engage in conventional warfare. These two groups must be convinced of the benefits of these recommendations. With the leaders who are not aware of the disparity, education might be enough to produce support. One way to overcome the leaders and traditionalists is to educate and communicate the way warfare is changing and the importance of all soldiers’ actions in the defense of our nation. Acceptance of changing warfare is not necessary for modifications of the current policy. To change the policy requires an understanding that all formations have the ability to contribute to the defense of our nation and those effects should be documented. Finally, these actions incur minimal cost and result in significant benefits.

Ultimately, the recommendations are for the betterment of the Army. Failing to execute them may result in failure to capture the history of the entire Army. That could lead to mistakes in future force development decisions, failure to recruit and train the correct future force, and the inability to provide the best force available for our commanders. By understanding the actions of all of our formations, we are better able
to articulate their contributions to our national defense. Failing to capture our strategic and specialized formations—as is our current practice—limits our ability to analyze and determine the necessary future force requirements and ensure we are prepared to fight and win future conflicts.

Endnotes


4 Ibid., 1.


6 Ibid., 5-24.

7 U.S. Department of the Army, Force Development and Documentation, 48.


14 Ibid., 35.

16 U.S. Army Center for Military History, *Organizational History* (Fort McNair, DC: Center for Military History, 1999), 5.


18 Ibid., 15.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 13.

23 Ibid.


